

February 28, 2019

Re: HB 7150

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and esteemed members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony on HB 7150 (Pension Cost Sharing). We wish to express our opposition to the pension cost sharing provisions in HB 7150.

We recognize, as do many other CT citizens that our state has serious financial problems and that state leaders want to take prompt corrective actions. However, Connecticut is already suffering from being one of the highest taxed states in the nation. This bill, along with the school regionalization proposals (which we also separately submitted testimony in opposition of) exacerbate the situation and are causing extreme harm to Connecticut in a number of ways. We are particularly concerned that there are so many new bills focused on increasing taxes, which will lead to a continued exodus of Connecticut citizens to other states and a further decline in state revenues.

Forcing towns to pay annual contributions for the pensions will create budget gaps requiring increase in property taxes. So, not only will the state begin levying all kinds of new taxes, homeowners will be burdened with yet another tax on top of a tax that is already high in towns like Weston where there is no commercial tax base.

Further, while local school districts negotiate teachers' salaries, they do not negotiate the terms of the pensions because the state does that. Asking towns to pay the costs of something in which they have had no say is inappropriate. Efforts should begin to revise the pension system in CT and adopt a 401K approach that so many others have already moved to.

We moved to Connecticut because of the fine reputation of the public schools, particularly selecting Weston, even with its higher taxes on homeowners due to a small commercial tax base. The continuing quality is what has kept us here for the entire K-12 education experience. None of the bills mention any aspect of school quality, which concerns us greatly. Connecticut is already facing an exodus of its population as it ages due to the poor management in the past of state affairs, this bill will further serve to have a negative impact on Connecticut's economy and population as people with school age children choose other states where they have certainty with regard to the payments (taxes) they will be required to make and how those funds are used to ensure quality for schools their children will attend.

We hope you will join us and oppose HB 7150.

Thank you again for hearing our testimony. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Russell and Theresa Golden

Weston, CT